

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

23 October 1973

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

MIDDLE EAST

State Dept review completed

Situation Report Number 71
(as of 1130 EDT)THE MILITARY SITUATIONGENERAL

1. Fighting continued on the Egyptian front today, but apparently is limited to the southern sector. According to the US Embassy in Tel Aviv, Israeli forces in the southern sector from Ismailia to the city of Suez have been ordered to continue fighting, but Tel Aviv considers the cease-fire to be in effect along the rest of the Suez front. The heaviest fighting appears to be near Suez as Israeli forces attempt to reach the Gulf of Suez and isolate Egyptian forces on the east bank. Extensive Israeli air activity has been observed this morning, virtually all of it south of Ismailia.

2. Action on the Syrian front is limited to the Mount Hermon area, where Israeli forces seized the ridge-line yesterday. Israeli fighter-bombers continue active over the battlefield.

EGYPTIAN FRONT

3. Israeli and Egyptian forces in the southern front from Ismailia to the city of Suez continue to battle on both banks of the canal. Tel Aviv spokesmen have

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stated the cease-fire is considered to be in effect along the rest of the Suez front. Tel Aviv and Cairo continue to exchange charges on the responsibility for breaking the cease-fire.

4. Large numbers of Israeli aircraft were noted attacking Egyptian targets along both banks of the canal south of Ismailia. Groups of 30 to 40 Israeli aircraft have been observed over the battle area. Egyptian response to Israeli air attacks continues to be limited to SAM and antiaircraft fire. No Israeli air strikes have been detected from Ismailia to Port Said.

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5. Israeli attacks toward Suez were designed to cut off Egyptian forces on the east bank, an Israeli spokesman said yesterday. Three of the six Egyptian bridges across the canal in the southern sector were seized by Israeli forces, according to the spokesman. Tel Aviv estimates that some 200 Egyptian tanks as well as infantry units south of Ismailia would thus be trapped on the east bank. Details on the battle near Suez are sparse; Israeli pilots have been told there are no SAMs in the area.

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SYRIAN FRONT

7. Fighting continues in the Mount Hermon area of the Syrian front. Tel Aviv claims to have recovered positions lost at the beginning of the hostilities, but press reports indicate there is heavy fighting underway at the foot of the mountain.

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Press reports carry an Israeli claim of 10 Syrian aircraft downed in an air engagement, but there are no further details.

8. Damascus claims to have downed 11 of 60 Israeli aircraft sent to bomb civilian targets north of Damascus today. The intended target may have been a supply depot north of the city where newly delivered equipment could be located. At least two Israeli aircraft were noted southwest of Damascus early this afternoon, indicating the Israelis are continuing their deep penetration of Syrian air space.

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ISRAELI AIR FORCE LOSSES

12. The chief of the Israeli air force yesterday described the shortage of aircrews as his most critical

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problem. He stated that only 70 crews were available to fly F-4 Phantoms. He also provided a detailed accounting of Israeli losses, which totaled some 104 aircraft: 32 F-4 Phantoms, 53 A-4 Skyhawks, 11 Mirages, 6 Super Mysteres, and two helicopters. These losses represent over one-fourth of the prewar Israeli inventory of about 390 fighters and fighter-bombers. US estimates had placed Israeli losses at about 135 aircraft. The air force chief claimed that 254 Egyptian and 205 Syrian aircraft had been destroyed since the start of the war. The US estimate of Arab losses totals about 400 aircraft.

13. He also claimed that the Israeli air force had flown some 11,000 strike and intercept sorties thus far, or about 700 sorties a day.

EGYPTIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE CEASE-FIRE

14. [redacted] has informed the US Interests Section in Cairo that Egyptian troops at all levels have bitterly protested President Sadat's decision to conclude a cease-fire with Israel.

[redacted] reports that within minutes of the time that the cease-fire went into effect the entire town erupted with firing from virtually every direction. He says he witnessed mutiny within the Egyptian army for about 45 minutes. Aimless firing was halted only after a threat by the Egyptian area commander to mortar any Egyptian troops who continued to fire.

15. [redacted] reported today that the majority of Egyptians appear critical of the cease-fire agreement. This includes most senior government and army figures. Most believe that Egypt will lose tactical military advantages from the cease-fire, and almost no one believes that the US, the USSR, or anyone else can bring Israel to give up the occupied territories.

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UNITED NATIONS

18. The Security Council is scheduled to meet at noon. Egypt, which requested the session, is expected to charge Israel with violations of the day-old cease-fire.

19. The debate is likely to become another exchange of invective, each side accusing the other of first breaking the truce. Syria--which has still not accepted Monday's cease-fire resolution--and other Arab states may broaden their criticism to the cease-fire provisions themselves. Arab states may demand that the US and the USSR accept their responsibilities as sponsors of the resolution and halt Israel's alleged violations.

20. UN diplomats have meanwhile been exploring means of policing the fragile cease-fire. Although

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there is growing support for the use of American and Soviet truce supervisors. China opposes this innovation. Peking, which has veto powers, did not participate in Monday's vote and has criticized the resolution as evidence of superpower collusion to perpetuate the no-war no-peace situation.

21. UN Truce observers in the Middle East have been instructed to take no initiative in the current cease-fire situation. On the Golan front--where more than half the stations remain in place--observer teams have continued to operate on their 1967 mandate. UN observers on the Suez front were withdrawn to Cairo at Egyptian request during the first days of the war. These teams are under the authority of the Security Council and their use could become a subject of today's discussions.

22. Having already rejected the cease-fire resolution yesterday, a spokesman for the Palestine Liberation Organization said today that the fedayeen will not take part in any peace negotiations, even if invited to do so.

SAUDI ARABIA

American arms deliveries to Israel reinforce Saudi suspicions and add to Saudi fears that the rested and re-equipped Israeli forces will resume the fighting after a brief cease-fire period. US Embassy contacts with high-level Saudi officials indicate that although the Saudi Arabian government wishes to minimize the damage that the present crisis may do to US-Saudi relations, it may feel compelled to increase pressure on the US if the cease-fire resolution fails to effect an Israeli withdrawal from at least some Arab lands or if renewed fighting results in serious military setbacks for the Arab forces.

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KUWAIT

24. Kuwait announced this morning that it still does not accept Security Council Resolution 242; nothing in the new cease-fire resolution necessitates a change in Kuwaiti policy. Kuwait will not object to sister states who take different stands in light of their own interests.

25. Oil exports to the Netherlands, which have amounted to about 11 percent of Kuwait's production, have been stopped because of the Netherland's "hostile" stand toward Arab rights.

SUDAN

26. The official Sudanese news agency today notes that Sudan's permanent representative to the UN has "agreed" to the cease-fire resolution. Local reaction in Khartoum appears largely one of relief at the possibility that the fighting may come to an end before Sudan becomes totally embroiled in the Middle East problem. Sudanese airborne, infantry, and armored units--probably the equivalent of no more than a brigade--reportedly are stationed in Egypt, but are not known to have become involved in the fighting.

IRAN

27. Although Iran has provided only token support to the Arab cause since the beginning of hostilities, the Shah is not about to let them forget the extent of it. He and the Iranian elite privately prefer an Israeli victory, but for political reasons have publicly associated Iran with the Muslim cause. As long as things are going well for the Arabs--or at least not badly--the Shah will want to continue to lay the groundwork for a satisfactory post-war relationship.

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ETHIOPIA

28. Emperor Haile Selassie announced today that Ethiopia had decided to sever relations with Israel "until Israel withdraws from the occupied territories." This brings to nine the number of African states that have broken relations with Israel since the war began. Ethiopia had been under Arab pressure for a change in relations for some time, and the pressures became more intense after the outbreak of new hostilities. The Emperor probably was reluctant to appear indifferent to these demands because of the possible repercussions on Ethiopia's continuing confrontation with Somalia over the disputed Ogaden territory. Ethiopian officials reportedly had come to feel that Somalia's support for the Arabs, however limited, probably ensured Arab support for Somalia in the event of armed conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia. In addition, Haile Selassie was reluctant to remain isolated from the growing African consensus favoring a break with Israel.

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